Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedure

Academic year 2026–2027

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Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a proportionate and rigorous safer recruitment process for a small alternative provision supporting up to 30 learners. Its purpose is to deter, identify and prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable learners while ensuring fair, lawful and inclusive recruitment.

This policy is written in line with current statutory safeguarding expectations for schools, colleges and alternative provision in England, and with Hampshire safeguarding expectations for education settings. It reflects Hampshire County Council's position that anyone employed by a Hampshire school is subject to appropriate pre-employment checks, including enhanced DBS, Children's Barred List where applicable, references, right-to-work, medical screening and online background checks. It should be read alongside the Academy's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing Policy, Data Protection and Retention Policy, Behaviour Policy and Low-Level Concerns procedures.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all paid staff, leaders, volunteers, agency workers, contractors, consultants, tutors, mentors, trainees and any adult who may have contact with learners through the Academy. It also applies when the Academy commissions or works with external providers. The level of checking will be matched to the role, frequency of contact, supervision arrangements and whether the person will be engaging in regulated activity.

3. Principles

- The welfare of learners is paramount.
- Safeguarding is considered at every recruitment stage.
- Recruitment decisions are evidence-based, recorded and subject to appropriate checks.
- No person begins unsupervised regulated activity until required checks are complete.
- Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled applicants without weakening safeguarding controls.
- Hampshire safeguarding expectations will be applied through the safer recruitment process, including clear information sharing, prompt escalation of recruitment concerns and recorded decisions about suitability to work with children.

4. Recruitment stages

- Approve the role, job description and person specification, including safeguarding responsibilities.
- Advertise with Hampshire-style safeguarding wording, making clear that the Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment, and that the post is subject to appropriate vetting.

- Use a standard application form; CVs may support but do not replace it.
- Scrutinise employment history, gaps, discrepancies and reasons for leaving.
- Shortlist against published criteria and record decisions.
- Undertake an online background search on shortlisted candidates before interview where lawful and proportionate. This is not part of shortlisting and should focus only on publicly available information relevant to suitability to work with children or in an education setting.
- Use a structured interview with at least two interviewers where practicable and include safeguarding questions. At least one interviewer will have completed safer recruitment training wherever practicable
- For posts directly involving work with children, obtain two pre-interview references wherever practicable, normally from the current and previous employer. References must be checked directly and any safeguarding concern, discrepancy or gap must be resolved before a firm offer is made.
- Complete identity, right-to-work, qualification and professional-status checks.
- Obtain the correct level of DBS and barred-list check where eligible and required.
- Record all checks on the Single Central Record before confirming unrestricted duties.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- **Director:** has overall accountability for safer recruitment, approves vacancies, ensures the correct checks are completed before appointment, reviews any concerns or risk assessments and confirms when a person may start work.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** advises on safeguarding risks during recruitment, supports decisions where information raises concern, contributes to risk assessments and ensures safeguarding concerns are escalated and recorded appropriately.
- **Recruiting manager:** prepares the job description and person specification, shortlists against the published criteria, records reasons for decisions, leads the interview process and ensures safeguarding questions are included.
- **Interviewers:** use agreed questions and scoring records, explore gaps or inconsistencies in employment history, assess suitability to work with children and ensure all decisions are based on evidence. At least one person involved in interviewing will have completed safer recruitment training wherever practicable.
- **Administration or HR support:** requests references, verifies identity and right-to-work evidence, records checks on the Single Central Record and alerts the Director to any missing or concerning information.
- **Hampshire or external HR support:** may be consulted for advice on safer recruitment, equality, non-UK workers, pre-employment checks, disclosure concerns, contract type and recruitment documentation where the Academy needs additional guidance.
- **All staff:** are expected to report concerns about recruitment, conduct, suitability or checks through safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures.

6. Conditional offers and pre-employment checks

- Enhanced DBS certificate, with children's barred-list information where the role is regulated activity.
- Identity and address verification.
- Right to work in the UK.
- Professional qualifications and registration where required.
- Employment history and satisfactory references.
- Overseas checks or certificates of good conduct where appropriate.
- Prohibition or management checks where applicable to the role.
- Children's Barred List check where the role meets the criteria for regulated activity.
- Health declaration limited to information necessary to establish fitness and reasonable adjustments after conditional offer.
- Where DBS identity documents cannot be produced through the normal route, the Academy will follow Hampshire or DBS-approved identity verification arrangements before confirming employment.
- Pre-employment medical screening or occupational health referral where required by the role or where reasonable adjustments need to be considered.

Any concern arising from checks, references, online searches, declarations or interview responses will be reviewed before appointment is confirmed. The Academy will consider the nature of the concern, relevance to the role, time elapsed, evidence of rehabilitation, safeguarding risk and whether additional advice is required. Decisions and rationale will be recorded confidentially.

7. References and employment history

References will be requested directly from referees using an Academy-approved template and will not rely solely on open testimonials. For roles that directly involve working with children, two references will normally be sought before interview wherever practicable, usually from the candidate's current and previous employer. References should confirm dates of employment, role, reason for leaving, suitability to work with children, any disciplinary action related to children or safeguarding, and whether the referee has any concerns. Gaps in employment, repeated short appointments, unexplained moves or inconsistencies will be explored with the applicant and recorded.

8. Online searches

In line with Hampshire education recruitment expectations and Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Academy will tell shortlisted candidates that an online background search may be carried out before interview. The search will only use publicly available information and will be limited to issues relevant to safeguarding, suitability to work with children, suitability to work in an education environment or professional conduct. The search is not a shortlisting tool; shortlisted candidates should still be offered an interview unless another lawful reason applies.

Any relevant concern will be recorded, considered fairly and discussed with the candidate before a final decision is made.

9. Starting before a DBS certificate is available

This will be exceptional. A written risk assessment must be approved by the Director and DSL, all other checks must be complete, the person must not undertake unsupervised regulated activity, and enhanced supervision must be documented until the certificate is seen and recorded.

10. Contractors, agency staff and volunteers

The Academy will obtain written assurance from the supplying organisation that required checks have been completed and will verify identity on arrival. Volunteers will be assessed according to the nature, frequency and supervision of their work. Unchecked visitors will remain supervised.

For agency, contractor and third-party staff, written confirmation must state that the appropriate checks have been completed, the date checks were completed and whether any disclosure information was supplied. Where contractors or sub-contractors will work in locations where they may have contact with children, the Academy will require written assurance that DBS eligibility has been assessed, enhanced DBS checks have been completed where required, positive disclosures have been considered before deployment, and a register of checks is maintained. The Academy will check photographic identification on arrival and will not accept written assurance where the role, level of supervision or safeguarding risk is unclear.

11. Recording, retention and Single Central Record monitoring

Recruitment evidence and check dates will be entered on the Single Central Record. Interview and unsuccessful applicant records will be retained in accordance with the Data Protection and Retention Policy. DBS certificate content will not be copied or retained beyond what is lawful and necessary.

The Single Central Record will be reviewed regularly by the Director or delegated senior leader to ensure it is complete, current and accurate. Any missing information will be treated as a priority safeguarding action. The record will include staff, volunteers, supply staff, regular contractors and any other adults who require inclusion due to their contact with learners.

12. Induction and ongoing safeguarding culture

Safer recruitment does not end at appointment. All new staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding induction before or at the start of their role, including the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, reporting routes, whistleblowing, low-level concerns, behaviour expectations and the identity of the DSL. Probation, supervision and performance management will be used to reinforce professional standards and respond quickly to concerns.

13. Referral duty

Where a person is removed from regulated activity because they harmed, or posed a risk of harm to, a child, the Academy will consider its statutory duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service and any professional regulator.

14. Hampshire safer recruitment routes and review

Where information obtained through the safer recruitment process raises a safeguarding or suitability concern, this must be considered before appointment is confirmed. This includes concerns arising from application information, employment history, references, online searches, DBS disclosures, barred-list checks, conduct information, identity checks, right-to-work evidence, agency assurances or contractor checks. The Director and DSL will decide whether advice is needed from Hampshire safeguarding, Hampshire or external HR support, the DBS or another relevant professional body. Decisions, advice received, risk assessments and outcomes will be recorded confidentially as part of the recruitment file. The Director and DSL will review this policy annually, or sooner if Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, HIPS procedures, DBS or statutory guidance changes affect safer recruitment requirements.